



Australian Government
Radiation Health Committee

Summary of the meeting held 25-26 November 2009

Opening of Meeting and Attendance

The Radiation Health Committee met at ARPANSA's Yallambie office on 25 and 26 November 2009. The Chair welcomed all members and observers. Dr Barbara Shields and Ms Heather Letwin (Secretary) were unable to attend.

Previous Minutes

The minutes of the 22 – 23 July 2009 meeting of the Committee were confirmed as an accurate record of the meeting.

RHC Strategy and Future Work Program

The Committee discussed the issue of best practice regulation with nationally uniform outcomes as the goal. It was agreed that a method of measuring performance outcomes was important to maintain a robust regulatory system. The Committee agreed to a proposal that half a day be put aside at the March 2010 meeting to further discuss the matter of best practice regulation. It was envisaged that an external guest with expertise in best practice regulation would be invited to address the Committee. The Committee discussed the importance of stakeholder consultation and a paper will be produced for its next meeting that deals with various examples from Australian, non-radiation industries.

National Directory for Radiation Protection

The Committee was advised that the Australian Health Ministers' Conference (AHMC) endorsement of Amendment 1 (additional Codes/Standards), Amendment 2 (exemptions/exclusions) and Amendment 3 (Medical Code) was dependent on a response from Queensland, who had not as yet replied. All other jurisdictions had replied in favour of adoption. The Committee was informed that draft NDRP Amendment 4, containing provisions on solaria, had received endorsement from the Australian Health Ministers' Advisory Council (AHMAC) and that papers seeking AHMC endorsement had been forwarded.

The Committee was informed that the *Code of Practice & Safety Guide for Radiation Protection in Veterinary Medicine* would be included in Schedule 11 of the NDRP via the draft Amendment 5 and the *Code of Practice for Radiation Protection in the Use of Ionizing Radiation by Chiropractors* could also now be included. The Committee agreed on these inclusions and that this Amendment now be released for public comment.

The Committee was also advised that a preliminary assessment of the need for a RIS for the draft NDRP amendment containing provisions for X-ray analysis equipment was being prepared. The Committee noted that the development of the NDRP amendment on competencies was dependent on the Government Skills Australia project and a draft RIS for the NDRP amendment on the disposal of radioactive waste by the user was in preparation.

The Committee agreed that the proposal to prepare a report to Ministers on the progress in implementing the NDRP be considered again after the best practice regulation discussion at the March 2010 RHC meeting.

Standard for Limits and Precautionary Measures for Reducing Exposure to Electric and Magnetic Fields (0Hz – 3kHz)

The Committee was advised that the draft Standard had been reviewed by a technical editor and that the subsequent changes made. Members were asked to consult within their jurisdictions concerning the draft Standard and provide comments by the end of the year. However, some members indicated that until the full package was available they would not be able to consult within their jurisdictions. The draft regulatory impact statement (RIS) is still being worked on prior to being sent to the Office of Best Practice Regulation for their clearance.

The Committee noted that further work was required to clarify costs and explain the benefits of exposure limits. It was expected that the full package of documentation would be available in time for decision at the March 2010 meeting. The Committee commented that an implementation package, including supporting plain language material for the web site, was required. It was also proposed that additional case studies on schools and rental properties be included in the precautionary annex. It was agreed that these examples should be prepared in the next few weeks, and that work on the supporting material should commence as soon as possible.

Revision of RPS 1

The Committee was informed of the progress in the revision of the RPS 1. The consultant tabled a minimalist approach showing the necessary changes to make RPS 1 consistent with ICRP 103. The Committee felt that there was a need for a set of documents to replace RPS 1. The Committee requested that a statement advising of changes to the tissue and radiation weighting factors as set out in ICRP 103, and recommending that where practicable they be used now, be drafted and circulated as soon as possible and that when finalised it be posted on the ARPANSA web site. The Committee also requested that the Standard part of RPS 1 should be advanced ahead of the remaining material, and suggested that a meeting of the steering group be convened as soon as possible to move the Standard on.

Safety Guide for Occupational Doses Received in Mining and Mineral Processing

Dr Rick Tinker, ARPANSA, Environmental and Radiation Health Branch, provided an update on the Safety Guide for Occupational Doses Received in Mining and Mineral Processing. The Committee was asked for feedback on the organization and layout of the document, whether to use ICRP 60 or ICRP 103 weighting factors, whether to include new radon dose conversions, and whether allowance should be made for wearing PPE. The Committee agreed that the use of designated/non-designated should be removed from the document, that the safety guide should be based on ICRP 103 not ICRP 60, that the document should include allowance for wearing PPE; and that the document was heading in the right direction. There was also agreement that with the changes agreed at the meeting, the draft should be released for public comment.

Recommendations for the Classification of Radioactive Waste

Mr Dessent, Secretariat ARPANSA, informed the Committee of the issues raised in the public comment submissions. These included a request for a change to the title, a proposal to remove Annex 2 as it was background to the development of alternative classification schemes and was therefore not relevant, and a proposal to include a definition of radioactive waste. The Committee agreed that the original title should not change and that Annex 2 should be removed. The Committee decided that members should provide feedback to the Secretariat regarding a definition of radioactive waste and once this issue was resolved the recommendations should go to Council for approval.

National Radiation Protection Qualifications, Accreditation, and Training Standards

The Committee was informed of the progress of developing national core competencies for radiation protection. The Committee was advised that Government Skills Australia (GSA), overseen by the RHC Working Group and a Steering Committee, had taken account of the comment on the draft units of competency for radiation protection, to the extent possible. The Committee agreed that a draft section for the NDRP be developed, using industrial radiography as an example, for the March 2010 meeting. It was noted that the development of competencies for Radiation Safety Officers still required some consideration.

Clarification of RHC Statement on First Responder Radiation Exposure

Dr Stephen Solomon, Manager, Health Physics Section, ARPANSA, joined the meeting and advised the Committee that the original statement had been prepared following a letter about two years ago. The NSW Fire Services have since prepared their own wording. The Committee decided that its previous statement of July 2007 was correct and should be brought up to date with the ICRP 103 terminology. A separate interpretation statement for fire protection services is to be drafted.

Future of RHS 8 (Nursing Code) and RHS 14 (Minimising Hazards)

The Committee was informed that the Radiology Liaison Panel had been consulted on RHS 14. The information on optimisation of patient doses was seen to be out of date and already replaced by the recent medical Safety Guides and ongoing DRL work. The advice to referrers is also out of date and will be replaced by information in the Quality Use of Diagnostic Imaging (QUDI) program developed by RANZCR. The Committee therefore decided to withdraw RHS 14. The Committee agreed to examine information produced by the QUDI program to see whether it sufficiently covered the areas of need for referrers. The Committee was also advised that nurse educators from RMIT had been consulted on RHS 8. The Committee noted that the provisions of the Code had been largely replaced by the Medical Code and Safety Guides, but there could be a need for a training document on radiation protection. However, it was acknowledged that the RHC is not mandated to create training material. The Committee decided to withdraw RHS 8 and write to nurse educators to inform them of this decision and suggest that they consider the need for a training guide.

COAG Recommendation on Offences and Penalties – follow-up From Nov 2008 meeting

The Committee was informed of the COAG Report on the Regulation and Control of Radiological Material which recommended that all jurisdictions should standardise offences and implement consistent minimum penalties for the illegal possession, use and transport of radioactive material. Mr Selva Kumar (ARPANSA, Policy and Source Security Unit) reviewed a range of existing terrorism laws to determine whether there are offences that are relevant to this issue. Mr Kumar advised that since the *Criminal Code Act* (sections 101.4 and 101.6 in particular) apply in all jurisdictions no further action was required. A request was made that all jurisdictions seek advice on whether this approach would be sufficient. The Committee agreed with Mr Kumar's proposal and Mr Kumar should draft a letter outlining this proposal and requesting feedback from each jurisdiction. The letter will be sent from the Chair of RHC to the relevant Departments in each jurisdiction.

Information Items

Progress reports on the following projects were provided and noted:

- NORM Safety Guide – additional annexes
- Safety Guide for the Use of Radiation in Schools Part 2: Lasers
- Transport Competent Authorities Working Group
- Meeting Report from the Radiation Health and Safety Advisory Council

The Committee noted a number of reports on relevant international meetings.

Prof Peter Johnston (ARPANSA, Director, Environmental and Radiation Health) attended the Commission on Safety Standards (CSS), IAEA, 14-16 October, Vienna, Austria.

Mr Burns (Acting CEO, ARPANSA) and Ms Evans (Director Regulatory and Policy Branch ARPANSA) attended the IAEA General Conference (14-18 September 2009, Vienna, Austria) and the Senior Regulators Meeting

Ms Evans also presented to the Committee a summary of discussions held at the 10th Steering Committee of the Asian Nuclear Safety Network held in Singapore, 20-22 October 2009.

Ms Evans noted that there was general concern over the shortage of molybdenum worldwide. Australia's operation of the OPAL reactor is seen to be essential to meet the worldwide demand for molybdenum with production expected to increase to enable export overseas.

Dr Cassels and Mr Andrew Johnston (SA EPA) attended a meeting of the Asian Regional ALARA Network (ARAN) (Beijing, China). The Committee requested that Dr Cassels provide a summary of the meeting out of session. Next year's meeting was proposed to be held in Adelaide adjacent to the ARPS Conference.

Mr Melbourne attended the 27th meeting of the Radiation Safety Standards Committee (RASSC) of IAEA (Vienna, 16-19 November 2009). Discussions centred on revision of the Basic Safety Standards, where the next draft was expected to be circulated for member state comments in late January 2010.

Mr Burns advised the Committee of discussions held at the International Committee on Radiation Protection (ICRP) meeting held in November, 2009 (Porto, Portugal). The main issue discussed was the revision of the radon risk coefficient, and a new ICRP statement on radon has now been released. New evidence shows that risks from radon were two-fold higher than those predicted in 1993. Committee 1 of the ICRP has been tasked to calculate new dose coefficients expected to be finalised by 2011. Mr Burns also informed the Committee of a range of work proposed in the five ICRP Committees.

Other Business

National Dose Register for Uranium Mining Workers – demonstration of database

The Committee was given a brief demonstration of the dose register database by Mr Robert Guilfoyle, ARPANSA, Environmental and Radiation Health Branch. The Committee was advised that the web portal:

- was ready to receive data;
- that doses files were required to be in CSV format; and
- that a document was being prepared detailing how to correctly enter the data.

Committee members enquired whether the database provided a means of checking whether doses were recorded properly. Mr Guilfoyle indicated the database simply collected raw data.

Dr Tinker advised that funding for the project finishes in June 2010 and that there was discussion with Department of Resources, Energy and Tourism about ongoing funding. He also indicated that a web page was being developed to allow workers to interact with ARPANSA.

Next Meeting

The date of the next meeting was confirmed as 24-25 March 2010 at ARPANSA's Yallambie office.